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The Director of Central Intelligence
Washington, D.C. 20505

National Intelligence Council

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26 March 1985

NOTE FOR: Chairman, National Intelligence Council
FROM: George Kolt
National Intelligence Officer for Europe
SUBJECT: Gorbachev's Priorities

1. I had lunch last Thursday with [redacted]
[redacted] foremost authority on Communist affairs. Examining the new
Soviet leadership, he expects that:

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- Gorbachev will move fast in all domains: personnel appointments, domestic and foreign policy.
- In foreign affairs, Gorbachev's first priority will be to improve relations with China. His meeting with Li Peng is a harbinger of things to come and is in sharp contrast with Andropov's and Chernenko's refusal to receive the Chinese representatives at the funeral of their predecessors. Gorbachev will try to visit China. His aim would be to have the Chinese (as well as the Yugoslavs) attend the 27th Party Congress. Should he achieve this, it would consolidate his own power as the leader who restored unity to the Communist movement. As for the Chinese, their statements on Sino-Soviet relations over the last year have been increasingly misleading. It is noteworthy, however, that they are no longer emphasizing the three obstacles. Mutual withdrawals along the Sino-Soviet border (but not from outer Mongolia) are to be expected, as are moves toward some accord over Afghanistan.
- Gorbachev will make more threatening gestures than his predecessors in Afghanistan, but the essence of his policy will be to work toward a withdrawal under the best terms possible.

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2. Comment. [] expecting an improvement in Sino-Soviet relations for the last two years at least and believes that Gorbachev has the imagination and vigor to move more decisively than his predecessors. I do not know if he will succeed [] but I agree he will move faster on various fronts than the standard analyses of a new Soviet leader suggest. Regarding Sino-Soviet relations there does now seem to be a mutuality of ideological interests in restoring Party-to-Party relations. [] Gorbachev's motives. For a Chinese leadership engaged in a series of significant reforms reconciliation with Moscow would also provide ideological cover and undercut possible domestic critics. I don't think we should become alarmed by these prospects. The strategic interests of the Chinese make the reconstitution of a Sino-Soviet Alliance highly unlikely. But I think we should anticipate an improvement in Sino-Soviet relations and see if we can take advantage of it for our own ends. For instance, an arrangement leading to a Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, even partial, would be as much a victory of us as for the Chinese. Whether this can be achieved is another question, but I think that, rather than trying to foster enduring Sino-Soviet tensions, we should try to channel any evolution in relations in a way beneficial to us.

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George Kolt

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